

She caught her plane with a few minutes to spare. The new mood was still with her. She felt remarkably strong and, in a queer sort of way, wonderful. She was astonished at what she had done, and a great sense of calmness began to settle upon her. By the time she reached Paris, she was strong and cool and calm. She met her grandchildren, and they were like angels, she told herself, so beautiful. And every day she took them for walks, and bought them presents, and told them charming stories.

Once a week she wrote her husband a nice letter, which always ended with the words "Be sure to take your meals regularly, dear, I'm afraid you may not be doing so when I'm not with you."

Everybody was sad when she had to return to America, to her husband. Everybody, that is, except her. And when she said good-bye, something in the things she said hinted that she might soon return. However, like the faithful wife she was, she did not overstay her time. Exactly six weeks after she had arrived, she sent a cable to her husband and caught the plane back.

Arriving at the airport, there was no car to meet her. But she was extremely calm. The taxi drew up before the house, and Mrs Foster persuaded the driver to carry her two large cases to the door. Then she rang the bell. She waited, but there was no answer. So she took out her own key and opened the door herself.

The first thing she saw as she entered was a great pile of mail on the floor. The place was dark and cold and the atmosphere was peculiarly oppressive. There was a faint and curious odour in the air that she had never smelled before. She walked quickly across the hall and disappeared for a moment around the corner at the back. There was something deliberate and purposeful about this action, as if she was off to confirm a suspicion. And when she returned a few seconds later, there was a little glimmer of satisfaction on her face.

She went into her husband's study. She found his address book, and she picked up the phone and dialled a number.

"Hello," she said. "Listen – this is Nine East Sixty-second Street ... Yes, that's right. Could you send someone round as soon as possible, do you think? Yes, it seems to be stuck between the second and third floors. At least, that's where the indicator's pointing ... Right away? Oh, that's very kind of you. You see, my legs aren't any too good for walking up a lot of stairs. Thank you so much. Good-bye."

She replaced the receiver and sat there at her husband's desk, patiently waiting for the man who would be coming soon to repair the lift.

Part Six

remarkably *forunderlig/forunderleg*
 queer *merkelig/merkeleg*
 sense *følelse/kjensle*
 faithful *trofast, lojal / trufast, lojal*
 overstay *bli for lenge*
 cable *telegram*
 persuade *overtale*
 pile *haug*
 peculiarly *besynderlig, merkelig / besynderleg, merkeleg*
 oppressive *knugende/tyngjande*
 faint *svak, uklar*
 odour *['əʊdə] lukt*
 deliberate *nøye overveid, behersket / nøye gjennomtenkt, beherska*
 purposeful *målbevisst*
 confirm *bekreftelse/stadfeste*
 suspicion *mistanke*
 glimmer *streif, anelse / streif, aning*
 satisfaction *tilfredshet / glede, hugnad*
 indicator *nål*
 receiver *(telefon)røret/(telefon)røyret*
 patiently *tålmodig/tolmodig*
 lift *heis*

READING OR LISTENING

1 We suggest that you either read or listen to the whole story before you start working on the tasks below.

READING

Reading for specific information

2 Work in pairs to answer the questions below.

- a **Part One:** Pick out all the information you can find about Mr and Mrs Foster.
- b **Part Two:** Why does Mrs Foster want to go to Paris?
 How long is she planning to be away?
 Why is she so nervous?
 What impression do you get of Mr Foster in this part?
- c **Part Three:** Why was the flight postponed?
 What did Mrs Foster do when she got this information?
 How did her husband react to the news?
- d **Part Four:** What did Mr Foster have to do before settling in the car?
 Why does he have to go back into the house one more time?
 Why does Mrs Foster ask the chauffeur to go and get her husband?
 Why doesn't he enter the house?
- e **Part Five:** What does Mrs Foster do outside the door?
 What does she finally decide to do?
 How does she feel when she arrives in Paris?
- f **Part Six:** What does Mrs Foster find when she opens the front door after her return from Paris?
 What does she do in her husband's study?

WRITING

Understanding literature

3

- a Write a short plot summary of the text.
- b Write a characterization of the two main characters. In the characterization of Mrs Foster you may try to explain how events reveal new sides to her character as the story develops.
- c Where and when do you think this story takes place? Describe the setting.
- d State the theme(s) of this story?
 For study tips, see page 305.

SPEAKING

Understanding literature

4 Sit in pairs or small groups and discuss the following:

- a Does the title fit the story?
- b What do you think Mrs Foster is listening to outside the front door?
- c Is Mrs Foster a good wife in your opinion? Explain.
- d Do you sympathise with Mrs Foster? Do you understand why she did what she did? Do you think she should go to prison?
- e What do you think Mrs Foster will do now?
- f How would you describe Mr Foster's attitude to his wife? What evidence is there of this attitude?
- g Is there anything in the text indicating that Mr Foster does not deliberately torment his wife?
- h Describe what you think happened to Mr Foster.
- i "They always seemed to be meeting in the hallway nowadays." What does this tell us about their relationship?
- j Is the ending of the story predictable or does it come as a surprise? Give reasons.
- k In what way are the letters she wrote from Paris ironic?
- l What label would you put on this story? Is it sad, funny, sinister, grotesque, scary, boring, entertaining, strange, humorous, stupid, or something else? Why?

Expressing opinions

5 Sit in pairs and discuss which of the following statements you agree with and which you disagree with.

- a I can understand that Mrs Foster didn't open the door before she left.
- b Mrs Foster should have separated from her husband a long time ago.
- c Mr Foster was a kind old man.
- d Mrs Foster deserves to live happily with her grandchildren in France.
- e Mrs Foster murdered her husband.
- f I am surprised that Mrs Foster didn't feel guilty about her actions.
- g Mr Foster had only himself to blame for what happened to him.